

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings, and versions of the claims.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for arbitrating between active and protected status, comprising the steps of  
  
identifying a plurality of cards capable of communicating with each other,  
  
allowing each card of the plurality of cards to make a determination of the health of another one of the cards of the plurality of cards,  
  
allowing each card of the plurality of cards to deliver to a different [another] card of the plurality of cards a vote representative of [the respective] each card's determination of the health of the different [other] card, [and]  
  
having a respective card of the plurality of cards determine as a function of delivered votes a health status representative of whether the respective card itself is to be isolated, and  
  
isolating the respective card as a function of delivered votes, wherein isolating a card includes entering a state that prevents the card from exchanging data.
2. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein determining as a function of delivered votes includes determining as a function of a majority of votes.
3. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein determining as a function of delivered votes includes determining as a function of a plurality of votes.
4. (Canceled).
5. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein making a determination of the health of a card includes measuring response time, identifying a parity error, identifying a check sum error, and identifying a failure to respond to a command.

6. (Canceled).
7. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1 [4], wherein isolating a card includes disabling a hardware interface to an external system bus.
8. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, further comprising a self-diagnostic test for having a card monitor local parameters to determine a health status for the respective card.
9. (Original) A process according to claim 7, further comprising determining an isolation state in response to the self-diagnostic test.
10. (Original) A process according to claim 7, wherein the self-diagnostic test includes monitoring a heartbeat timer.
11. (Original) A process according to claim 1, further comprising the step of monitoring a control signal representative of an instruction to adjust between a protection state and an active state.
12. (Currently Amended) A system for arbitrating between an active state and a protected state, comprising
  - a plurality of cards capable of exchanging data, each card of the plurality of cards having
    - a card monitor for monitoring parameters of other cards in the system representative of operating characteristics,
    - a vote out mechanism, responsive to the monitored parameters, for generating a vote signal representative of an assessment of [a] each card's operating condition, and

a vote tally mechanism, responsive to vote signals received from other cards in the system, and capable of changing an operational state of a respective card in response thereto, and

an isolation processor for isolating the respective card as a function of delivered votes, wherein isolating the respective card includes preventing the card from exchanging data.

13. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 12, wherein the vote tally mechanism includes a processor for detecting a majority vote with vote signals received.
14. (Canceled).
15. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 12, wherein the card monitor includes means for measuring a response time of a card.
16. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 12, wherein the card monitor includes means for detecting an error in a data signal received from a card.
17. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 12, further comprising a lock circuit for requiring a processor to perform a series of predetermined operations to gain access to a memory location.
18. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 12, further comprising a self-diagnostic process for testing local parameters representative of local status of the respective card.
19. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 18, wherein the self-diagnostic process includes means for altering a state of the respective card.
20. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 18, wherein the self-diagnostic process includes means for driving [a] the respective card into an isolation state.

21. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1 [4], wherein isolating [a] the respective card includes disabling an interface that allows the isolated respective card to deliver the vote representative of the isolated respective card's determination of the health of another one of the cards.
22. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, comprising  
adding a card to the plurality of cards, and  
preventing the addition of the card from interfering with the steps of identifying [a] the plurality of cards, allowing each card to make [a] the determination, allowing each card to deliver, and having the respective card determine a health status.
23. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, comprising  
removing a card from the plurality of cards, and  
preventing the removal of the card from interfering with the steps of identifying [a] the plurality of cards, allowing each card to make [a] the determination, allowing each card to deliver, and having the respective card determine a health status.